

VZCZCXRO3727
OO RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM
DE RUEHML #2509/01 2080133
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 270133Z JUL 07
FM AMEMBASSY MANILA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7574
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS IMMEDIATE
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH IMMEDIATE 0343
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHHMUNA/CDRUSPACOM HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 002509

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [RP](#)

SUBJECT: MNLF DELEGATION DISCUSSES PEACE PROCESS

REF: A. MANILA 2342

[1](#)B. MANILA 1701

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary. At their request, senior representatives of detained Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) Chairman Nur Misuari met with DCM and poloff at the Embassy June 23 to promote the 1996 Final Peace Agreement as the foundation for peace, security, and development in Mindanao. Frustrated and disappointed over repeated postponements of a conference to review implementation of the 1996 agreement, the delegates appealed for U.S. assistance in fast tracking full implementation of the nearly 11-year old peace accord. Misuari's chief spokesman, Almarin Tillah, optimistically speculated that MNLF and Moro Islamic Liberation Front forces would be consolidated when complete autonomy was achieved. DCM welcomed the delegation's visit and affirmed U.S. support for implementation of the 1996 agreement. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Detained Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) Chairman Nur Misuari sent a seven-person delegation to the Embassy July 23 to discuss the Mindanao peace process. Accompanying Misuari's chief spokesmen -- Philippines Muslim Leader Forum Secretary-General Almarin Tillah and Attorney Firdausi Abbas -- were Attorney Ombra Jainal, Attorney Yasser [1](#)B. Lumbos, Father Eliseo "Jun" Mercado, Jr., University of the Philippines Institute of Islamic Studies Dean Mashur Bin-Ghalib Jundam, and former Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao Department of Transportation and Communication Secretary Abdul Jalil Hassiman.

SIPDIS

[1](#)3. (SBU) In his introductory remarks to DCM and poloff, Almarin Tillah said Misuari remained the only legitimate MNLF leader recognized by the 57-member Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). Tillah claimed greater unity among MNLF factions, and disagreed with the term "Misuari Breakaway Group" in referring to Misuari and his followers. In Tillah's view, the Council of Fifteen broke away from the mainstream MNLF under Misuari and not vice versa.

[1](#)4. (SBU) According to Jundam, the MNLF hierarchy currently includes Vice-Chairman Jimmy Labawan, Secretary General Ustadz Murshi Ibrahim, Secretary General of Foreign Relations Abdulbaki Abubakar, and Chief of Staff Julhambre Misuari. Attorney Abbas added that a Shariah Court, Bangsamoro Congress, and the Bangsamoro forces were also under the MNLF Central Committee.

[1](#)5. (SBU) During an open and frank discussion, the MNLF delegates promoted the 1996 Final Peace Agreement as the foundation for peace, security, and development in Mindanao. However, they expressed frustration and disappointment with non-implementation of the nearly 11-year old peace agreement,

and repeated postponements of the tripartite conference proposed for Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

¶6. (SBU) Tillah and Abbas hoped the tripartite conference could be held as soon as possible in Jeddah (vice Jakarta as the government wants), ideally before the beginning of Ramadan in September, to resolve "gaps" and "ambiguities" in the final peace accord. Abbas noted that provisions for the appointment of Muslims to the Philippine Supreme Court and Cabinet, formation of a regional security force, and "collapsing" of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao into a "Bangsamoro Autonomous Government" have not been implemented.

¶7. (SBU) Tillah stressed the importance of tackling these issues at a tripartite conference on "neutral territory", and disagreed with changing the venue from Saudi Arabia to Indonesia or any other country within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

¶8. (SBU) Tillah optimistically speculated that upon full implementation of the 1996 peace accord, it would be incumbent upon the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) to consolidate its forces with the MNLF "whether they liked it or not." While acknowledging that MNLF Chairman Misuari and MILF Chairman Murad Ebrahim have yet to meet, Jundam said MNLF and MILF Central Committee members are in regular communication as "text mates." Jundam also mentioned that the late MILF Chairman Salamat Hashim had told Misuari that MILF forces would join the MNLF once full autonomy was achieved.

¶9. (SBU) On behalf of Misuari, Tillah thanked the United States for extending development assistance to the people of Mindanao, and appealed for U.S. engagement with the OIC, MNLF, and Government of the Philippines to "fast track" full

MANILA 00002509 002 OF 002

implementation of the final peace agreement. Jundam said the U.S. could play a particularly useful role in helping establish a monitoring mechanism.

¶10. (SBU) DCM stressed U.S. support for the peace process and described Embassy's multi-faceted approach to promoting peace and development in Mindanao. DCM also highlighted President Bush's initiative to appoint a special envoy to the OIC, the importance of a continuing dialogue between the MNLF and Embodys, and U.S. support for the implementation of the 1996 agreement.

Comment:

¶11. (SBU) This July 20 meeting was our first engagement with a delegation of such senior MNLF representatives. Although we made no commitments, we intend to pursue a dialogue with the MNLF to improve the prospects for lasting peace in Mindanao.

Visit Embassy Manila's Classified SIPRNET website:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eap/manila/index.cfm>

You can also access this site through the State Department's
Classified SIPRNET website:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/>
KENNEY